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## **MONTANA LIBRARY COURIER PILOT**

### **Montana Library Courier Pilot**

#### **Definition**

**"A dependable, reliable and predictable delivery service that, with a desired level of frequency and security, physically moves library materials from one library to another or from a library to a library patron."**

#### **How the Courier Pilot Works**

The routes for the Courier Pilot include drop sites (distribution hubs). Participating local libraries served by these drop sites independently determine the frequency and the method of delivery between them and their assigned drop sites.\*

Items can be checked out and returned at any library most convenient for the user. The delivery and return of the item is reliable, often faster than traditional mail, and more cost effective for both libraries involved.

#### **Accomplishments of the Courier Pilot So Far**

Volume has grown from the initial April, 2010 total of 8 libraries moving 110 items, to a December, 2010 total of 38 libraries moving 2,244 items.

Cost savings to the libraries including postage, mailing supplies and interlibrary loan staff time have grown from \$1,100 in the first month of the pilot to over \$22,440 in November, 2010. During the first 8 months of the pilot, libraries saved over \$85,220 in resource sharing costs. December savings will be over \$100,000.

The planned 12 dropsites have been implemented, enabling service to all areas of Montana.

A total of 8522 items were moved between participating libraries between the beginning of the pilot (April, 2010) and November 2010. The pilot is funded until the end of FY2011.

A contracted courier has successfully met the definition of a library courier service, demonstrating the ability to expand services when required and providing services safely and on time.

Some dropsite libraries have creatively assisted served libraries with the cost of their local courier, demonstrating the willingness on the part of Montana libraries to help make a library courier system a reality in Montana for all libraries, even those in rural areas.

Participating libraries have been able to share other types of material via the courier, including shared trunks of resources for local story times and activities and a statewide traveling laptop lab.

#### **Continued Need for a Library Courier System in Montana**

The most recent figures collected show that in 2009, over 170,000 individual items moved between Montana libraries, compared to 36,000 in 1990. Interlibrary loans continue to increase each year, as the patron's ability to discover materials online increases and local libraries struggle to provide materials on their own.

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\* A statewide courier pilot in Montana will by necessity include some amount of movement of materials by mail.

The Courier Pilot has demonstrated the same kind of cost savings as seen in surrounding states that have long established library courier systems. Libraries using the courier system have seen a per item cost, including postage, mailing supplies and staff time, drop from \$10.00-\$12.00/item to between \$1.00-\$2.00/item.

The number of libraries participating in the Courier Pilot will continue to grow, if funding assistance is continued. A layer of second tier dropsites that could serve libraries within closer geographic areas would enable extremely rural communities in Montana to participate. These second tier dropsites would feed into the established, larger dropsites.

### **Benefits**

The Courier Pilot has promoted more library resource sharing across the state and leveraged local dollars by lowering the overall costs of resource sharing among libraries.

Libraries lacking sufficient budgets to adequately build their local collections have benefitted substantially from an easier method of sharing materials, giving their users a substantially larger pool of resources.

The Courier Pilot has enhanced the Montana patron's library experience, enabling patrons to get more for less.

### **Cost of Continuing the Courier Pilot**

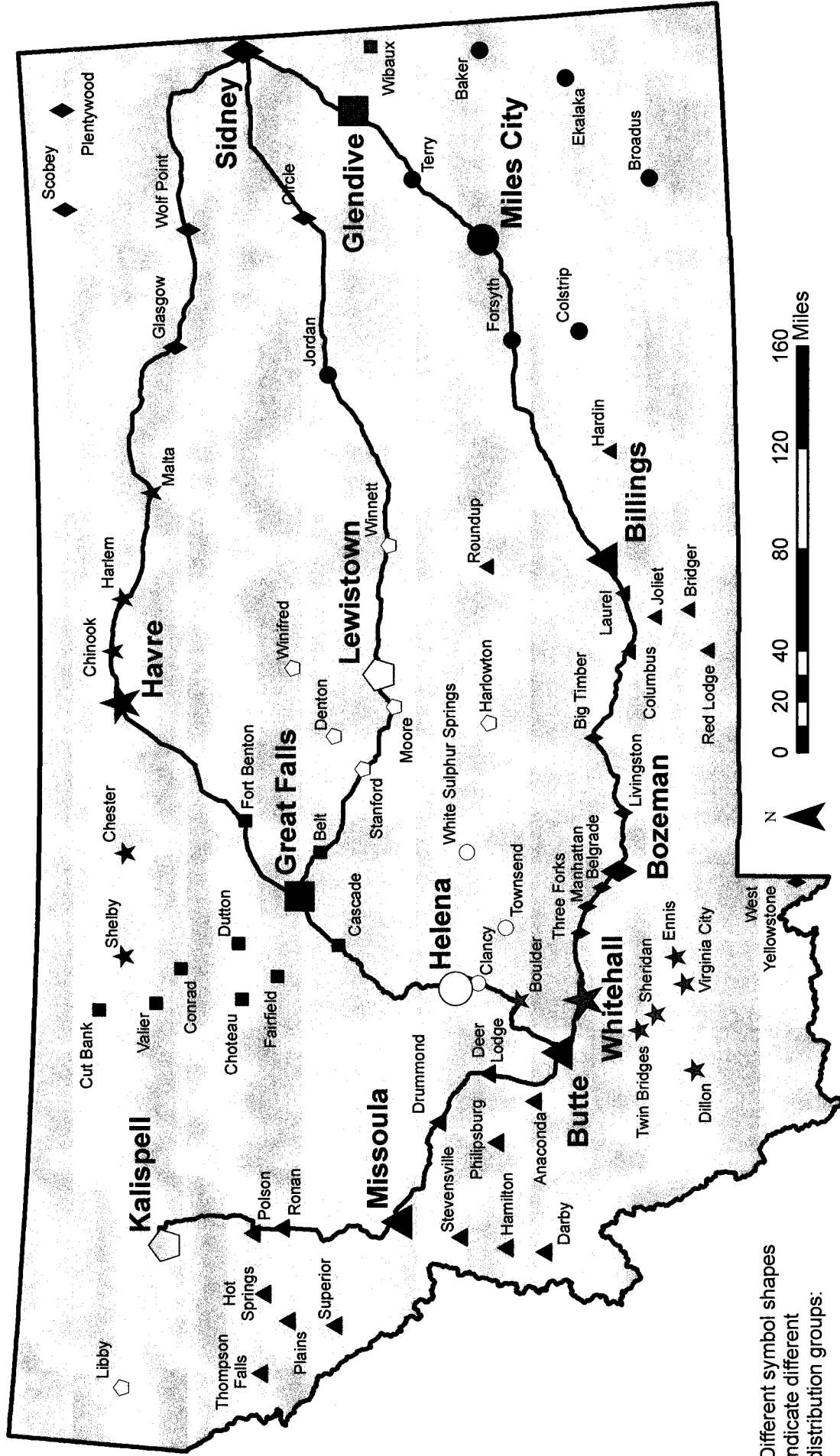
The \$200,000 per year cost is based on current and anticipated demand, population served, delivery alternatives, and information obtained from research of library courier systems operating in other states.

### **Sustainability**

Montana libraries of all types currently participate in several statewide projects that are sustained by successful, shared cost formulas. The current Courier Pilot has begun to identify a similar cost structure, with the aim of making courier services affordable to any library desiring those services.

# Montana Library Courier/Delivery Service Pilot

## Library Locations with Drop Sites and Courier Routes\*



Different symbol shapes indicate different distribution groups:

- Large symbols are drop sites
- Small symbols of the same shape are potential library locations served by that drop site

\* Library distribution routes determined by libraries and contractors